

April 4, 2002

William F. Caton, Acting Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW, Suite TW A325
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Mr. Caton,

The Florida Division of Library and Information Services applauds the Commission for the tremendous success of the E-Rate Program and for providing a forum for proposal and discussion of program improvements through the "Notice of Proposed Rule Making for the Schools and Libraries Universal Service Support Mechanism (E-rate)" (CC Docket 02-6). Florida public libraries have enthusiastically embraced the role of providing the public with technology and Internet access and training. The E-Rate contributes greatly to these efforts and our continued success depends on a healthy E-Rate program.

The Division endorses the filing of the American Library Association and we particularly urge you to take the following actions:

- **Support the Purchase of Wireless Networks** - Make the purchase of wireless WAN and LAN equipment eligible for discounts. The emergence of these products in the marketplace is the next wave of innovation and the program must support them if technology in libraries and schools is to remain relevant and if the program is to realize its innovation and technology neutrality goals.
- **Increase the Funding Cap** – Demand exceeds the cap. The cap will have to be increased if the program is to play a meaningful role in supporting internal connections and advanced telecommunications services – including the critical need for wireless noted above.
- **Provide Equitable Discounts for Library Applicants** – The need for equity in the program requires that public libraries be provided with an alternative method for establishing discounts. Allowing school districts to use individual schools' discounts while limiting libraries to the district averages means most libraries are ineligible for internal connections with current demand and funding levels. This change is necessary if libraries are to benefit from the program in the coming wireless deployment.

- **Support State Coordinators** - Recognize the role state coordinators play in the day to day operation of the program and pay the minimal cost of their travel to Schools and Libraries Division training. The states provide substantial training, consulting, and support that contribute to the program's success. In the wake of 9/11 state travel budgets are tight and the least the program can do is pay the cost of state coordinator participation in Schools and Libraries Division training.

Division staff work actively supporting local libraries' participation in the program and at the national level with the Schools and Libraries Division and the American Library Association. At this point in the program's development we believe that it is important to recognize and commend the Schools and Libraries Division and its staff for their highly professional administration of the program and a job well done.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Barratt Wilkins